

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Remains of Great-winged Petrel found in a Wedge-tailed Eagle's Nest near Corrigin.**—On March 27, 1972 I examined a Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest 12 miles south of Corrigin. In it I found the upper mandible of a Great-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera*). I had visited the nest six weeks before and removed all food remnants then in it. The nest was occupied by the birds during the previous nesting season.

—J. A. ESTBERGS, Gooseberry Hill.

**An Autumn Record of the Pallid Cuckoo in the Perth Area.**—The Pallid Cuckoo, *Cuculus pallidus*, is usually regarded as a regular migrant in the South-West, arriving in the Perth area about the end of May and departing late November. An observation on 9 March 1972 at Osborne Park of a recently fledged Pallid Cuckoo being fed by a Singing Honeyeater, *Meliphaga virescens*, indicates that not all individuals follow this migratory pattern.

Pallid Cuckoos of similar juvenile plumage in the Western Australian Museum have been collected at: South Perth, 27 July 1903 and 27 January 1903; Welshpool, 21 October 1930; Kelmseott, 13 January 1900; Tambellup, November 1921; and Dirk Hartog Island, 20 October 1910.

—JOHN DELL, W.A. Museum, Perth.

**Singing Honeyeater Feeding like Bee-eater.**—Whilst it was clinging to the side of a *Banksia attenuata* blossom a Singing Honeyeater, *Meliphaga virescens*, snatched a bee from the air. Flying to a previous year's dried banksia cone, and again clinging to the side in a similar manner, the bird proceeded to emulate the bee-sting removing behaviour of the Bee-eater or Rainbow-bird, *Merops ornatus* as described by Misses C. A. Nicholls and D. A. Rook (*W. Aust. Nat.*, 8, 1962: 84). The bee was rubbed first on one side and then the other side of the cone before it was consumed. However the preliminary tapping to orient the sting, as described by Misses Nicholls and Rook, was not in evidence. This unusual behaviour was so pronounced that we stared in surprise and spoke in unison, "Rainbow-bird".

—J. and A. Y. PEPPER, Scarborough.

**Garden Snail, *Helix aspersa*, at Gibb Rock, via Narembeen.**—Gibb Rock is situated 61 km east-south-east of Narembeen and 32 km north-north-east of Hyden. Rainfall in that area appears to be about 330 mm annually. In August, when I last visited this area, my son, Malcolm gave me a specimen of *Helix aspersa* which he had found among produce from the garden of a neighbour, Mr. Wm. Lang. The following day, August 27, we had occasion to visit Mr. Lang and I found these snails well-established in his garden which is trickle irrigated from a subsidiary dam.

None of the snails which I saw was very large—few, if any, exceeding 25 mm in diameter. All were dark and seemed rather thin-shelled. The absence of really large specimens may indicate that the colony is relatively new and not, as I am inclined to suppose, that this population is somewhat dwarfed.

—ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Harvey.

**Copulatory Behaviour of the Pink-eared Duck.**—According to Frith (*Waterfowl in Australia*, 1967) copulation, and the display associated with it, have not been observed for the Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*). On Saturday, September 23, we observed this behaviour at Lake Claremont in the early morning, about 6.45 a.m. Unfortunately we were not able to watch the display completely. We were attracted by a commotion which suggested territorial display. One duck appeared at first to be driving another away, flapping close to the surface of the water. The male mounted the female on the water, clasping the nape of her neck in his bill. We will attempt to observe this species more systematically on

Lake Claremont. At present there are from 4 to 6 pairs on the Lake, and by the end of September two pairs had ducklings, one brood of 4 and one of 5.

—DAVID and MARK HUTCHISON, Swanbourne.

**Wanderer Butterfly Sightings in Western Australia (September 1971 to May 1972).**—In September 1971, I published a paper (*W. Aust. Nat.*, 12: 25-27) on the occurrence of the Wanderer Butterfly, *Danaus plexippus*, in Western Australia. Since then, the following sightings of this butterfly have been reported to me.

Wembley Downs, 22 February; Woodlands, 23 February; Wembley, 5 March; Riverton, 21 March; Kalamunda, 22 March; Palmyra, 22 March; Cottesloe, 1 April; Kalamunda, 6 mi. E. of, 9 April; between Toodyay and Northam, 15 April; Armadale, 23 April; Darlington, 23 April; Mt. Yokine, 25 May.

The above sightings concern one or two butterflies on single days. It is perhaps still too early to decide whether the Wanderer is increasing in numbers and breeding range around Perth and in parts of the south-west.

—L. E. KOCH, Western Australian Museum.

**Sightings of the Aquatic Fern, *Salvinia auriculata*, in the Canning River.**—On August 28 and September 14, 1972, *Salvinia auriculata* was observed in Aquinas Bay, Canning River, a region subjected to brackish estuarine conditions in summer. Earlier in the month it was observed washed ashore further west at Point Mt. Henry and the river stretches approaching Canning Bridge.

Appearance of this bouyant aquatic fern followed calm still days, the plant apparently drifting downstream with the influx of freshwater after winter rains. Such a sighting has not been reported in the last 11 years.

The abundance of the plants indicates that *S. auriculata* must be spreading in the upper stretches of the river, past the Riverton Bridge, where year round aquatic conditions are fresh.

Such drift plants did not survive in this region of the river and are usually washed ashore during following windy conditions.

N. SAMMY, Aquinas College, Manning.

**Frequency of Leg Damage in Gulls.**—Some large flocks of Silver Gull, *Larus novaehollandiae*, were observed near sundown on the south-east beach of Pink Lake, four miles north of Esperance on the 23rd and 24th of January, 1972. Here they assembled after flying in from the ocean beaches before moving across to roost on a mudflat at the eastern end of the lake. It was noted that a very high proportion of the gulls were standing on one leg. A representative section of the flock was counted, and of 68 birds, 29 appeared to be one-legged. Closer observation of the birds as they took off in flight, or were thrown off balance by the wind, indicated that perhaps a fifth of the gulls standing on one leg were in fact two-legged, but behaved as though they were too lame to rest their weight on both legs for any length of time. One or two proved to be two-legged without any obvious signs of lameness, and they may have been resting on one leg for preference. The leg damage seemed to be commoner in adult birds than in birds with juvenile plumage, and a count of 18 juveniles showed only three one-legged individuals.

Similar counts were made by one of us (L. E. S.) during the second week of February at a number of beaches on the west coast with the following results: Crawley Bay, one one-legged bird among 42; Bunbury, no one-legged birds among 55; Busselton, no one-legged birds among 30; Mandurah, three one-legged birds among 94.

It is usually assumed that gulls lose a leg while swimming on the sea as a result of attack by fish. These observations strongly suggest that this type of predation is considerably more intense in the Southern Ocean near Esperance than it is in the Indian Ocean between Perth and Busselton,